**Introducing the Elements of Argument**

from Smith, Michael, Jeffrey Wilhelm, and James Fredricksen. 2012. *Oh Yeah!: Putting Argument to Work Both in School and Out.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The authors suggest that the place to start teaching the elements of argument is through talk. They begin units by talking with students about topics that engage them: music, movies, sports, etc. They consistently use the language of the Toulmin model of argument to talk about these topics. Here is a template for conducting your own who’s the best conversation using the model.

Note: Top ten lists can be found at <http://www.thetoptens.com/lists/>

Teacher: Who’s the best \_\_\_\_? or What’s the best \_\_\_\_?

Student: (claim)

T: What makes you say so?

S: (evidence)

T: Who says so?

S: (forwarding)

T: So what?

S: What do you mean, “So what?”

T: I mean why does it matter that \_\_\_\_\_?

S: (warrant or connection)

T: (counter) Well, he/she/it is not \_\_\_\_

S: (response) Yeah, but ...

Students eventually anticipate the questions. They give better evidence to avoid the “What makes you say so?” question and make clear connections between data and claims to avoid “So what?” They also anticipate possible rebuttals to claims and offer responses even before the rebuttals are offered.

After you have drawn the argument to a conclusion, go back and identify the elements of the argument. Students could refer to “The Shape of an Argument” page.

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